Obama administration takes strong stance against pot legalization

Once again, President Obama's administration is standing in the way of pro-working class, civil rights legislation. In response, the Democratic Party's base is dropping out from under them. In order to offset the lost votes, Obama and the democrats are doing everything they can to get their base motivated – everything except listening to them.

President Obama has been racing across the country these past several weeks in a desperate attempt to rally the Democratic base and get out the vote, responding to large Republican gains in key senate and gubernatorial races.

Panicked Democratic Party organizers have hurriedly booked him on several tour stops across the country targeting youth, African-Americans and first time voters in an effort to recreate the wave of enthusiasm that swept Obama into the White House in 2008.

The tour, however, will likely be seen by many Americans as too little, too late.

According to a recent Associated Press-Knowledge Networks poll, Obama's core base is falling apart at the seams: nearly a fourth of the constituency that voted for him in 2008 will be voting Republican this mid-term election. On top of that, only half of Americans who voted for Obama in 2008 have committed to turn out this November.

“In a reversal from 2008,” observes AP author Liz Sidoti, “[a recent AP poll] found that Obama backers who expected change in Washington – 63 percent – now think nothing ever will happen. Just 36 percent still think Obama can do it…”

The feeling is understandable. Most of Obama’s and the Democratic Party’s most notable achievements have left the American people wanting much more. Americans who believe health care legislation should have gone much further, for example, outnumber Americans who opposed the legislation by a margin of 2-1.

Of course, to recoup much of the lost youth turnout for these mid-term elections, many might wonder why the Obama administration isn’t taking a more lenient stance on the recent attempts to legalize marijuana in California. Turnout for the November elections in California this year are up significantly, largely because of the widespread support marijuana legalization has from young voters (54% of whom support it, against 34% who oppose). Endorsing the proposition could prove beneficial for many Democratic candidates.

“He’s not listening to the majority of the people who elected him,” said SaraSue Crawford of Jacksonville, Fla. in an interview with the Associated Press. “It’s like he’s ignoring his base.”

Most of Obama’s liberal base (well over half of whom support the legalization of marijuana) are probably saying the same thing about his administration’s recent stance on California’s Prop 19 – the ballot initiative which would legalize the growth and sale of weed.

The Obama Administration’s Attorney General Eric Holder, it was revealed last week, is strongly opposed to the proposition. In a letter to the Drug Enforcement Administration, Holder made it clear that even if California voters pass the measure, the administration’s Department of Justice will continue to aggressively prosecute possession and distribution of marijuana in California. Says Holder:

“We will vigorously enforce the [Controlled Substances Act] against those individuals and organizations that possess, manufacture or distribute marijuana for recreational use, even if such activities are permitted under state law…”
The move has outraged many of prop 19′s supporters, including the ACLU, which responded to the Obama administrations’ hard line on marijuana on Monday, arguing that the continued criminalization of marijuana wastes scarce resources during hard economic times and disproportionately affects communities of color, particularly black and Latino communities.

“The ACLU took heart from Director Kerlikowske’s acknowledgment that the ‘war on drugs’ has failed,” states the ACLU’s letter. “But instead of scaling back the rhetoric associated with that ineffective and out-of-date campaign, it appears the administration would resist California’s modest attempt to begin dismantling one of the defining injustices of our failed drug policies: that the war on drugs has become a war on minorities.”

The assertion has some powerful statistics behind it.

Of all drug users in the United States today, 70% are white, while only 14% are black and 13% Hispanic. However, when we look at incarceration rates, the numbers are nearly turned on their heads. Only 29 percent of inmates in state prisons for drug offenses were white, while a whopping 45 percent were black and 20 percent were Hispanic. Federal prisons were no more representative, with 25%, 31%, and 40% for whites, blacks and Hispanics, respectively.

In 2008 alone, California police made 78,500 arrests related to marijuana.

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